Environmental Assessment Checklist

Project Name: Medicine Lodge Conifer Encroachment Treatment
Proposed Implementation Date: Spring 2018
Proponent: Dillon Unit, Central Land Office, Montana DNRC
County: Beaverhead

Type and Purpose of Action

Description of Proposed Action:

The Dillon Unit of the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) has received a request from Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) for a conifer encroachment removal project in the Medicine Lodge Drainage. The project is located on state trust land T11S, R12W, Sections 9, 16, 28 & 33. The project will benefit primarily sage grouse habitat by removing scattered Douglas-fir from sagebrush-grassland habitat. This project could begin as early as spring 2018 and could take up to 5 years to complete. The NRCS has secured funding for this project in the Medicine Lodge Drainage (T11S, R12W, Sections 9, 16, 28 & 33) that is a continuation of treatments that have occurred on adjacent Federal and private lands.

Conifer encroachment has been identified as a considerable threat to sage grouse conservation (80 FR 59858, October 2, 2015), and reducing the prevalence of rangeland-invading trees has been identified as an important objective for this region of southwest Montana.

Objectives of the Project:

- Removal of low density conifers that are encroaching into sage brush habitat across several identified areas in southwest Montana. Conifers to be removed include Douglas-fir, Rocky Mountain juniper, and limber pine.

The project is based on the expansion of Douglas-fir and Rocky Mountain juniper into historical sagebrush habitats. Conifer encroachment is considered a significant factor in lek extirpation due to conifers providing support to common terrestrial and avian predators of sage grouse. The goal of this project is to prevent Douglas-fir from invading and degrading core sage grouse habitat. Sage grouse nest habitat use has been documented to diminish at 3% infestation by conifers. The principal citation supporting this work is Severson et al. 2017.

Severson, J.P., Hagen, C.A., Maestas, J.D., Naugle, D.E., Forbes, J.T. and Reese, K.P., 2017. Effects of conifer expansion on greater sage-grouse nesting habitat selection. *The Journal of Wildlife Management*, *81*(1), 86-95.

Duration of Activities:

The initiation of project-related activities would begin approximately May 2018. Treatments may continue up to November 2022 depending on individual project funding.

Project Development

SCOPING:

- DATE:
  - March 3, 2018- March 30, 2018
- PUBLIC SCOPED:
  - The scoping notice was posted on the DNRC Website: http://dnrc.mt.gov/public-interest/public-notices
  - Adjacent landowners, statewide scoping list, newspapers, user groups, posted on DNRC website
- AGENCIES SCOPED:
  - MT DNRC Archeologist, Patrick Rennie
  - Montana FWP Wildlife Biologist, Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program
  - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- COMMENTS RECEIVED:
  - Montana FWP and the MT Sage Grouse Program (Program) commented.
  - Concerns: The Sage Grouse Program recommends efforts to conduct field operations after July 15 to be consistent with the executive order. The two-main concerns of the Program are weed management to control noxious weeds and invasive plants including cheatgrass and Japanese brome. The second concern is to limit disturbance of nesting sage grouse.
  - Results (how were concerns addressed): Ground disturbance by hand crews during the conifer removal operations would be minimal. Once operations are completed monitoring of the site for cheatgrass and Japanese brome will be done for the next three years. If the invasive grasses are found they will be sprayed with herbicide.

Internal and external issues and concerns were incorporated into project planning and design and will be implemented in associated contracts.

OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

- No other government permits are required for this proposal.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

During development of this project two distinct alternatives were considered, which include the Proposed Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative.

No Action Alternative – Under the No Action Alternative, the DNRC would not authorize the NRCS to implement the project on State Trust Lands.

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Action Alternative, DNRC would allow the NRCS to implement conifer removal activities on State Trust Lands. Conifers would be removed with chainsaws (lop and scatter). Trees will be cut near ground level and left to deteriorate in-place.

Impacts on the Physical Environment

Evaluation of the impacts on the No-Action and Action Alternatives including **direct, secondary, and cumulative** impacts on the Physical Environment.

VEGETATION:

The NRCS mapped conifer encroachment in the project area using a combination of aerial photography and site inspections. Phase 1 encroachment class is dominated by sagebrush with scattered conifers typically less than 2 meters tall. In the proposed treatment area, NRCS and the Hansen Ranch identified approximately 184 acres of Phase 1 encroachment was identified on the state section.

Vegetation	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Noxious Weeds	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Rare Plants	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Vegetative community	**x**					**x**				**x**			**No**	**1.**
Action														
Noxious Weeds	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Rare Plants	**x**				**x**				**x**				**Yes**	**2.**
Vegetative community		**x**				**x**				**x**			**Yes**	**3.**

Comments:

1. Under the No Action Alternative, conifer encroachment would continue into sagebrush/grassland dominated vegetation community types. As no activities would occur or be possible under this alternative, no mitigations would be possible to reduce this occurrence.

2. A data query was conducted by the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP) for the project on (January 5, 2018) to identify possible endangered, threatened and sensitive plants in the proposed treatment area. No sensitive, endangered or threatened species of plants were found to be in the area.

3. Under the Action Alternative beneficial effects to native plant communities in the area would be expected from conifer removal treatments.

SOIL DISTURBANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY:

The NRCS soil survey of Hansen Creek shows five major soil types in the proposed project area. The soils that make up the project area are: (Polaris, stony-Dyce-Shoddy complex), (Doolittle-Bridger-Inabnit complex), (Rooset, extremely bouldery-Bridger, very stony-Libeg, stony complex), (Finn-Slagamelt-Hairpin, stony complex) and (Doolittle, very stony-Nieman, stony-Bridger, very stony complex). The soil survey of Schwartz Creek also shows five major soil types. The soils that make up this part of the project area are: (Bearmouth, very boulder-Libeg, extremely stony-Bridger complex), (Libeg-Finn, frequently flooded-Sebud families, complex), (Hardhart, very stony-Tropal, very stony-Rock outcrop complex), (Foolhen, frequently flooded-Cowcamp-Houlihan complex), (Rooset, extremely bouldery-Bridger, very stony-Libeg, stony complex).

Soil Disturbance and Productivity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Physical Disturbance (Compaction and Displacement)	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Erosion	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Nutrient Cycling	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Slope Stability	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Soil Productivity	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Action														
Physical Disturbance (Compaction and Displacement)	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**
Erosion	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**
Nutrient Cycling	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**
Slope Stability	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**
Soil Productivity	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**

Comments:

1. No Action Alternative, there would be no activities to allow any impact to soil productivity or soil disturbance.

2. Action Alternative, would allow for the removal of conifers using chainsaws (lop and scatter). No negative effects on the soil productivity or soil disturbance are expected with this alternative.

WATER QUALITY AND QUANTITY:

Schwartz and Hansen Creeks, both perennial streams, run through a portion of the proposed project area.

Water Quality & Quantity	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Water Quality	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Water Quantity	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Action														
Water Quality	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**
Water Quantity	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**

Comments:

1. Under the no Action Alternative, there will be no impact to current water quality or quantity.
2. Conifer encroachment within the SMZ will be removed to improve and enhance the growth of deciduous plants in the riparian area. Given the project requirements, measurable direct, indirect and cumulative impacts to water quality and water resources would not be expected.

FISHERIES:

Fisheries	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Sediment	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Flow Regimes	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Woody Debris	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Stream Shading	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Stream Temperature	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Connectivity	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Populations	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Action														
Sediment	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**
Flow Regimes	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**
Woody Debris	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**
Stream Shading	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**
Stream Temperature	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**
Connectivity	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**
Populations	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**

Comments:

1. No Action Alternative, there would be no impact on the fisheries.

2. Given the project requirements, measurable direct, indirect and cumulative impacts to fisheries would not be expected.

WILDLIFE:

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Species of Concern														
Sage Thrasher *(Oreoscoptes montanus)* Habitat: Sagebrush, grasslands, and other semi-arid habitats	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Pygmy Rabbit (*Brachylagus idahoensis)* Habitat: Big sagebrush and suitable soils for burrowing habitats	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Arctic Grayling *(Thymallus arcticus)* Habitat: Small, cold, clear lakes with tributaries suitable for spawning	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Wolverine *(Gulo gulo)* Habitat: Alpine tundra, and boreal and mountain forests	**x**				**x**				**x**				**Yes**	**2.**
Westslope Cutthroat Trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkia lewisi*) Habitat: Cold, gravely, pool and cover dominated streams	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Clark's Nutcracker *(Nucifraga columbiana)* Habitat: Mature to old burned or beetle-infested forest	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Golden Eagle	**x**				**x**				**x**					

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
(Aquila chrysaetos) Habitat: Cliffs and large trees and hunt over prairie and open woodlands														
Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*) Habitat: Variety of habitats across a large elevation gradient	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Northern Goshawk *(Accipiter gentilis)* Habitat: old-growth forests with a preponderance of large trees, a dense canopy, and a relatively open understory	**x**				**x**				**x**				**Yes**	**3.**
Brewer's Sparrow *(Spizella breweri)* Habitat: Shrubsteppe habitats dominated by sagebrush	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Western Toad *(Anaxyrus boreas)* Habitat: Variety of wetland habitats across a large elevation gradient	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Hoary Bat *(Lasiurus cinereus)* Habitat: forested areas, feed over water	**x**				**x**				**x**					**4.**
Ferruginous Hawk *(Buteo regalis)* Habitat: Sagebrush steppe	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Mountain plover (*Charadrius montanus*) Habitat: short-grass prairie & prairie dog towns	**x**				**x**				**x**					

Wildlife	Impact												Can Impact be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Peregrine falcon *(Falco peregrinus)* Habitat: Cliff features near open foraging areas and/or wetlands	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Pileated woodpecker *(Dryocopus pileatus)* Habitat: Late-successional ponderosa pine and larch-fir forest	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Greater Sage grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*) Habitat: sagebrush semi-desert	**x**					**x**				**x**			**Yes**	**5.**
Townsend's big-eared bat *(Plecotus townsendii)* Habitat: Caves, caverns, old mines	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Big Game Species														
Elk		**x**				**x**				**x**			**Yes**	**6.**
Whitetail		**x**				**x**				**x**			**Yes**	**6.**
Mule Deer		**x**				**x**				**x**			**Yes**	**6.**
Other		**x**				**x**				**x**			**Yes**	**6.**

Comments:

1. Pygmy Rabbit – The project area lies within a mile of a confirmed breeding area for the species. The primary habitat in Montana for the species is “shrub-grasslands on alluvial fans, floodplains, plateaus, high mountain valleys, and mountain slopes, where suitable sagebrush cover and soils for burrowing are available.” By removing encroaching conifers from the sagebrush-rangeland communities the positive impact on the species is greater than the negative impact. There is no negative impact expected. *Pygmy Rabbit — Brachylagus idahoensis. Montana Field Guide. Montana Natural Heritage Program and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Retrieved on January 9, 2018, from http://FieldGuide.mt.gov/speciesDetail.aspx?elcode=AMAEB04010*

2. Wolverine – The project area falls within 6 miles of confirmed occupancy of wolverines, the Woverine is a species of concern. However, high elevation peaks and basins that possess late persistent snowpack in spring are not present in the project area. Given that preferred denning

habitat for wolverines would not be treated under the proposed action, no direct, indirect, or cumulative effects to wolverines would be anticipated.

3. Northern Goshawk – The project area lies within one mile of a confirmed nesting area of the Northern Goshawk. The species prefers "mature and old-growth forests with a preponderance of large trees, a dense canopy, and a relatively open understory (Hayward and Escano 1989, Squires and Reynolds 1997, Clough 2000). An exception to this generality is in Beaverhead County, where nests commonly occur in Lodgepole Pine stands with an average tree diameter of only 13 cm, although the birds usually place their nests in larger trees within these stands (Kirkley 1996)." The activities of this project are not expected to have a negative impact. *Northern Goshawk — Accipiter gentilis. Montana Field Guide. Montana Natural Heritage Program and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. Retrieved on January 16, 2018, from http://FieldGuide.mt.gov/speciesDetail.aspx?elcode=ABNKC12060*

4. Hoary Bat – The project area is within a confirmed area of occupancy for the species. The Hoary Bat only occupies Montana in the summer months and the preferred habitat is in forested areas, while foraging is done over bodies of water. This project is not expected to have any negative effect on the bat.

5. Greater Sage Grouse – Conifer encroachment has been identified as a considerable threat to sage grouse conservation (80 FR 59858, October 2, 2015), and reducing the prevalence of rangeland-invading trees has been identified as an important objective for this region of Montana. Proposed treatments would be planned and implemented in a coordinated fashion with conifer removal efforts on nearby state land. The project is based on the expansion of Douglas-fir and Rocky Mountain juniper into historical sagebrush habitats. The primary objectives of the treatments are to: 1) remove encroaching conifers from Phase 1 density class areas to maintain the acreage of healthy sagebrush-rangeland communities for sage grouse, and reduce the presence of potential perch sites for avian predators near known leks; 2) force back conifer seed walls near sagebrush community types for maintenance and reduce the source of conifer seed and its abundance in sagebrush/grassland areas. 184 acres of state trust lands proposed for treatment would temporarily (several decades) reduce the abundance and prevalence of Douglas-fir and juniper that is beginning to invade sagebrush rangelands in the area providing a longer-term cumulative benefit to the abundance and availability of sage grouse habitat.

6. Other Terrestrial and Avian Wildlife Species – Vegetation communities on the project area likely provide suitable habitat for numerous other terrestrial and avian wildlife species. Such species would likely include elk, deer, forest carnivores, small mammals, prairie and forest associated neotropical migrant birds, raptors, black bears, etc. Treatments could remove vegetative cover usable by some species, and during treatments, motorized disturbance treatment associated with conifer removal could disturb and displace wildlife in the area for up to two months. Generally, species associated with native rangeland and sagebrush habitats would benefit, whereas species more associated with coniferous forest for meeting life requisites would not benefit. Given the types of proposed treatments, the acreage that would be treated,

and the short duration activities would occur (approximately 2 months in spring/summer 2018), minor adverse direct, indirect and cumulative effects to resident species would be expected.

Linkage, Corridors, and Habitat Connectivity – The project area is focused on edge habitat situated along a forest-grassland ecotone. As such, forest cover is patchy and likely occurred in a patchy fashion under historical conditions. The project area does not occur within any known linkage zones or corridors important for maintaining connectivity of populations or migration routes. However, the potential for both short and long-term fragmentation and loss of rangeland and sagebrush habitat would be reduced, providing benefits for associated species such as sage grouse.

AIR QUALITY:

Air Quality	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Smoke	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Dust	**x**				**x**				**x**					**1.**
Action														
Smoke	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**
Dust	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**

Comments:

1. Under the no action alternative, there would be no impact to the air quality.

2. Under the action alternative, vehicle travel to and from the project area could result in an increase of dust particulate within the project area. There will be no burning within the proposed project and no smoke will be created. No long term or cumulative impacts to air quality would be anticipated.

OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

No other known environmental documents or federal actions are being examined within the project area.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES / AESTHETICS / DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

The project area is semi-arid, sagebrush covered steppe/foothills, and the topography is characteristically steep to moderately steep.

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Historical or Archaeological Sites	**X**				**X**				**X**					**1**
Aesthetics	**X**				**X**				**X**					
Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, or Energy	**X**				**X**				**X**					
Action														
Historical or Archaeological Sites	**X**				**X**				**X**					**2**
Aesthetics		**X**				**X**				**X**				**3**
Demands on Environmental Resources of Land, Water, or Energy	**X**				**X**				**X**					

Comments:

1. A Class I level review was conducted by the DNRC staff archaeologist for the areas of potential effect (APE) on state land. This entailed inspection of project maps, geologic maps, the DNRC's TLMS database, and General Land Office Survey Plats. The Class I search revealed that a few cultural resources have been identified in, or near, the APEs. Further, Class III level inventories have covered less than 20% of the APEs. The cultural resources identified consist of both historic and precontract items. Precontact items are limited to thin scatterings of chipped stone debitage, low-profile cairns, and tipi ring-size stone circles. Historic cultural resources consist of roads/trails and building remnants.
2. In general, the terrain within the state land portions of the APEs is steep (40+ percent slopes). Additionally, there are a lack of springs and a lack of geology that would suggest caves, rock shelters, or sources of tool stone. Because neither cultural nor paleontologic resources density is expected to be high on the state-owned portions of the APEs, no additional archaeological investigative work will be conducted. However, if previously unknown cultural or paleontological materials are identified during project related activities, all work will cease until a professional assessment of such resources can be made. The proposed treatment involves the lopping of young Douglas fir in localities where immature trees are typically spaced several feet or yards apart. This will entail one or more individuals using chainsaws, and walking from tree to tree. Trees will be cut near ground level and left to deteriorate in-place. This form of treatment has no potential to physically or visually impact any kind of cultural or paleontologic resource.

   Because no cultural or paleontologic site has been identified on private land within the APEs, proposed conifer encroachment treatments will not impact these resources.

3. Conifer removal would alter existing vegetation and have a minor, temporary effect for up to several decades on the visual appearance of the affected lands and associated landscape. Treatments would appear natural and would likely be almost non-discernable to most casual observers. Minor expected changes would be cumulative to other natural and man-caused disturbances across the landscape over time.

References Cited:

Connor, Melissa A. and Kenneth P. Cannon 1991. Forest Fires as a Site Formation Process in the Rocky Mountains of Northwestern Wyoming. *Archaeology in Montana* Vol 32(2): Pp. 1-14.

Picha, Paul , Stanley A. Ahler, Rodney D. Sayler, and Robert W. Seabloom. 1991. Effects of Prairie Fire on Selected Artifact Classes. *Archaeology in Montana* Vol 32(2): Pp. 15-28.

Impacts on the Human Population

Evaluation of the impacts on the proposed action including <u>direct, secondary, and cumulative</u> impacts on the Human Population.

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
No-Action														
Health and Human Safety	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Quantity and Distribution of Employment	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Local Tax Base and Tax Revenues	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Demand for Government Services	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Access To and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Density and Distribution of population and housing	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Social Structures and Mores	**x**				**x**				**x**					

Will Alternative result in potential impacts to:	Impact												Can Impact Be Mitigated?	Comment Number
	Direct				Secondary				Cumulative					
	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High	No	Low	Mod	High		
Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Action														
Health and Human Safety		**x**				**x**				**x**			**Yes**	**1.**
Industrial, Commercial and Agricultural Activities and Production	**x**				**x**				**x**					**2.**
Quantity and Distribution of Employment	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Local Tax Base and Tax Revenues	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Demand for Government Services	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Access To and Quality of Recreational and Wilderness Activities	**x**				**x**				**x**					**3.**
Density and Distribution of population and housing	**x**				**x**				**x**					
Social Structures and Mores	**x**				**x**				**x**					**4.**
Cultural Uniqueness and Diversity	**x**				**x**				**x**					

Comments:

1. Proposed tree slashing activities would require adequate safety measures to be in place to ensure the safety of workers. Safety requirements complying with OSHA standards and federal and state safety regulations would be required for all sawing operations.

2. The proposed treatments that would be conducted using project funding would not be expected to alter any existing traditional agricultural or ranching uses on the project area or surrounding lands.

3. Conifer removal along forest fringe areas would alter existing vegetation and have a minor, temporary effect for up to several decades on the visual appearance of the affected lands and associated landscape. Treatments along the forest-grassland ecotone would appear natural and would likely be almost non-discernable to most casual observers. Minor expected changes would be cumulative to other natural and man-caused disturbances across the landscape over time.

4. The proposed treatments that would be conducted using NRCS funding would not be expected to disturb or alter any native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects that are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur?

No.

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant?

No.

Environmental Assessment Checklist Prepared By:

Name: Don Copple and Jackson Spooner
Title: Dillon Unit FMO & Senior Engine Boss
Date: May 2018

Finding

Alternative Selected

Proposed Action Alternative – Under the Action Alternative, DNRC would allow the NRCS to implement conifer removal activities on State Trust Lands.

Significance of Potential Impacts

Upon review of the project and analysis herein, I find that none of the impacts are severe, enduring, geographically widespread, or frequent. Further, I find that the quantity and quality of the natural resources, including any that may be considered unique or fragile, will not be adversely affected to a significant degree. I find no precedent for the future actions that would cause significant impacts, and I find no conflict with local, State, or federal laws, requirements, or formal plans. In summary, I find that adverse impacts would be avoided, controlled, or mitigated by the design and implementation of the project to an extent that they are not significant.

Need for Further Environmental Analysis

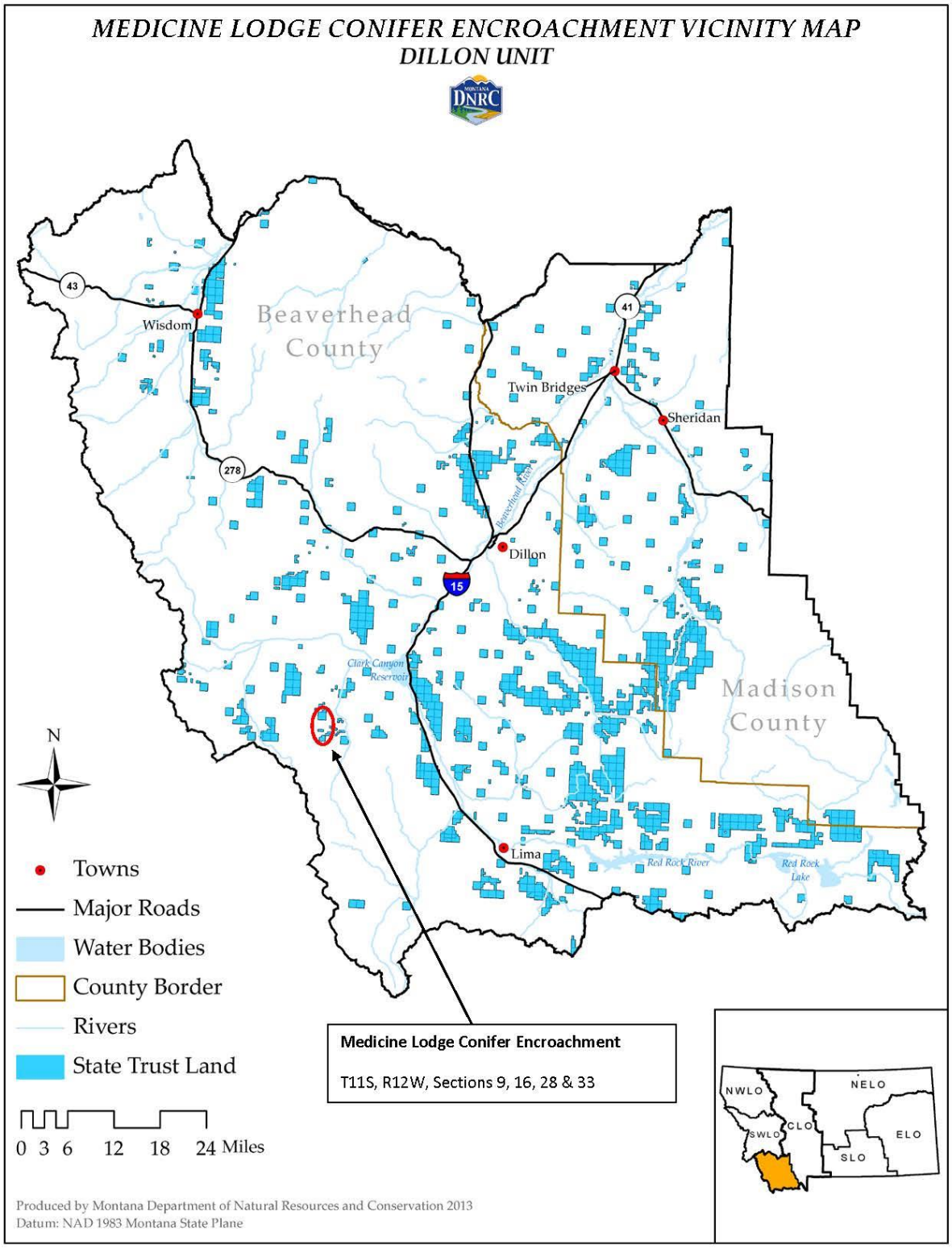
[ ]	EIS	[ ]	More Detailed EA	[X]	No Further Analysis

Environmental Assessment Checklist Approved By:

Name: Timothy Egan
Title: Dillon Unit Manager
Date: May 25, 2018
Signature: /s/ Timothy Egan

Attachment A - Maps

Project Maps



Hansen/Medicine Lodge - Encroachment Project
T11S, R12W, Sections 9, 16, 28 & 33
NRCS